

Betsy /

MARY HARTMAN
MARY HARTMAN

EPISODE #186

by

Lynn Phillips

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FINAL DRAFT
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

MARY	LOUISE LASSER
HEATHER	CLAUDIA LAMB
MERLE JEETER	DABNEY COLEMAN
WANDA RITTENHOUSE	MARIAN MERCER
GARTH GIMBLE	MARTIN MULL
ANNIE WYLIE (TIPPYTOES)	GLORIA DeHAVEN
CLETE MEIZENHEIMER	MICHAEL LEMBECK
HAROLD CLEMENS	ARCHIE HAHN
BARTENDER	ROBERT STONEMAN
JIM (A CAMERAMAN)	

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ACT ONE

CAPRI LOUNGE - LATE AFTERNOON, HAPPY HOUR

GARTH IS BRIEFING WANDA.

GARTH

Okay now, when they ask you what you're gonna wear, what do you say?

WANDA

A simple dress.

GARTH

Good. And, "Are you excited?"

WANDA

"Am I ever!!!" (HOT)

GARTH

No. See now, that's a trap. Never tell the media you're excited. It's the kind of word they can twist.

WANDA

"I couldn't be happier"?

GARTH

Great! Perfect! Now: "Do you think you can handle the stresses and strains of political life?"

WANDA

I hope not to stress the strains, but rather to...

GARTH

(INTERRUPTING) No, no, no. Too long and complicated. Just say, "I'm hoping I can."

WANDA

"I'm hoping I can."

HAROLD CLEMENS ENTERS. GARTH SEES.

GARTH

(TO WANDA) Right. (WAVING) Harold!

Good to see you, ol' boy.

AS THEY SHAKE HANDS AND AD LIB HOW-ARE-YOU'S, IGNORING WANDA, CLETE ENTERS WITH JIM, A TIRED UNION PORTA-PAC HACK IN HIS LATE 50'S.

GARTH

Clete! Come and meet Harold. He just spent a week in the pen for protecting a source.

CLETE

Hey! That's integrity.

HAROLD

Yeah, well, you'd have done the same.

CLETE

A week? Maybe. How'd you get out so fast?

HAROLD

By telling them everything I knew. That place was a hell-hole. No kidding.

GARTH

(HA HA) You know the old saying, "The
pen is mightier than the source."

HA HA.

CLETE

Nice try, anyway, Harold.

HAROLD

Thanks.

GARTH

Drinks! This calls for a drink! Harold?
Clete?

EACH MAKES GESTURES OF REFUSAL.

JIM

Hey, I'll take a shot... and one for
the lady over yonder.

CLETE

Watch it, Jim... you know the rules...
no shots on a shoot.

GARTH

Oh, just one won't hurt. What'll it be,
Jim?

THE BARTENDER IS LISTENING.

JIM

Wild Turkey.

GARTH

Compliments of Merle Jeeter.

JIM

(TO BARTENDER) Make it a double.

HAROLD

Hey, Garth, where's our man?

GARTH

Just a couple of minutes. We kind of had to squeeze this in, you know.

CLETE

A couple of minutes? That getting to be his trade mark? You realize that two minutes of silence on TV is what put him in City Hall? "Silent Night"

... that's what we call it over at the station. *Five minutes and he could be president.*

IN THE B.G. WE SEE JIM ORDER ANOTHER.

HAROLD

"Silent Night". Pretty cute.

GARTH

Good tag.

CLETE

It was great, that speech. I had honest-to-goodness tears in my eyes. "Time to start listening to ourselves"! Whoever came up with that idea's a genius.

GARTH IS LOOKING PRETTY SMUG.

CLETE (CONT'D)

Was it really you, Garth? Come on... off the record... tell me.

GARTH

Modesty precludes...

MERLE HAS ENTERED. WANDA, WHO'S
TAKEN A DIM VIEW OF GARTH'S "MODESTY,"
SEES MERLE... WANDA RUNS TO HIM...

WANDA

Merle! Merle!

HE PUTS HIS ARM AROUND HER.
ACKNOWLEDGES HER WITH A SLIGHT
NOD.

MERLE

(TO ROOM) Hello there, one and all.

I'm grateful you could all wait...

because we called you here for what I
think's a pretty important announcement.

CLETE

Wait! Let's make it an interview.

(GRABBING MIKE AND GOING TO MERLE) Mr.

Jeeter... (NODS TO HIM). Mr. Jeeter...

(GESTURES TO JIM) Film, dammit!

Excuse me, Mr. Jeeter... (TO JIM)

We're taping this, dummy. Now!!

JIM

Can't.

CLETE

Whadda ya mean, "Can't"?!

JIM

I'm not loaded.

CLETE

You're loaded enough, you son of a...

Excuse me, Mr. Jeeter.

MERLE

You're excused.

WANDA

Merle... while he's getting loaded, I've
got to talk to you.

GARTH

Merle! Harold!

MERLE

(WITH A WAVE) Back in a minute, boys.

MERLE AND WANDA MOVE ASIDE.

WANDA

Merle...

MERLE

What's up?

WANDA

You've been so busy!

MERLE

I know. Can't help it.

WANDA

I just had to talk to you... alone.

MERLE

Well, here I am.

WANDA

You look wonderful.

MERLE

Thanks. What's on your mind, sweetheart?

WANDA

A party... (NO REACTION) A wonderful
little engagement party I've set up for
us... tonight.

MERLE

(SHAKES HEAD) Can't make it. Sorry.

WANDA

At my place?

MERLE

It's not a good idea, Wanda.

WANDA

Just you and me?

MERLE

There's no such thing as 'just you and me' any more. I'm in the public eye.

WANDA

But Merle...

MERLE

We'll have to wait 'til it's legal...
Come on now, let's not keep these boys waiting.

WANDA

But Merle...

MERLE

Their dinner're getting cold, hon. And...
(CHECKS WATCH) I've got an interview with Newsweek in fifteen minutes.

WANDA

(LEFT ALONE) Newsweek? That's national!!

MERLE

(APPROACHING THE BOYS) Sorry for the mix up, fellas, but I've got another date to make.

(MORE)

MERLE (CONT'D)

So, the gist of it is: Me and Wanda,
Ms. Rittenhouse, are going to be married
on Election Eve!

AD LIBS OF CONGRATULATION.

MERLE (CONT'D)

Thanks.

GARTH

And the reception's in City Hall. Come
one, come all!!!

MERLE

Right, and the angle is, see, the folks'll
be getting two public servants for the
price of one.

WANDA

Not that I'll be on the public payroll,
although, of course, I will accept any
volunteer position.

MERLE

I'm sorry, fellows, but I've really got
to run... so please do the best you can
with Wanda here, and I'll be available
in the morning.

HE TURNS AND EXITS.

CLOSEUP ON WANDA.

WANDA

Merle...!

SHE TURNS AND IS FACING JIM'S LENS.

JIM

Smile at the birdie.

WANDA DOES.

CLETE

We'll make it a quickie, Jim.

JIM

(TO WANDA) Okay, now step forward just
a hair.

WANDA DOES BUT JIM STAGGERS.

JIM (CONT'D)

Oh, rats! We almost had it!

HAROLD

Excuse me, but why don't you try
focusing the lens instead of the lady?

JIM

(ANGRY) Because the girl's easier, you
dumb canary!

HAROLD

Don't call me a canary, you Wild Turkey
turkey!

JIM

(YELLING TO CLETE) Ask her a question,
Clete. And tell her to answer in focus!

CLETE

(WITH MIKE) Um... you must be excited.

WANDA

Couldn't be happier.

JIM

Great! Garbo! Garland! Throw her
another.

CLETE

Um... um... (CAN'T THINK OF ONE)

HAROLD IS PUTTING ON HIS HAT,
READY TO LEAVE WITH GARTH...

HAROLD

(SUGGESTING) Stresses and strains.

CLETE

Right. Do you feel you can handle
the stresses and strains of political
life?

WANDA

I couldn't be happier.

CLETE

(TO JIM) Great! It's a wrap.

WANDA

(REALIZING) No! Wait! That wasn't
it! It's supposed to be, "I'm hoping
I can."

CLETE

Sorry. Too late.

WANDA

"Hoping" not "Happy". Just one more
try, Clete, please?

CLETE

(CONSOLING) Next time.

WANDA

Ohhh...

SHE SINKS, RUNS, INDICATES EXTREME
DISTRESS.

FADE OUT.

ACT TWOTIPPYTOES' TRAILER - LATER

WANDA'S MASCARA HAS RUN. ANNIE'S
WEARING A SKIRT AND SWEATER.

WANDA

I just stood there saying, I couldn't
be happier"! It was horrible. And I
blew my lines.

ANNIE

That used to happen to me all the time
when I was doing little theatre... "Out,
out"... and then I couldn't remember
the part about the damn spot.

WANDA

And they wouldn't do a retake! And then
Merel walked out on me.

ANNIE

You're kidding.

WANDA

Well, actually I walked out on him, but
it's the same thing.

ANNIE

But why?

WANDA

Because he was being so 'male' and so 'unreachable'. I wanted a little cozy evening at the apartment and he wanted to be a politician.

ANNIE

But he is a politician. You made him a politician.

WANDA

So we could spend cozy evenings discussing the latest Roper Poll or reworking first draft speeches...

ANNIE

I guess men just aren't as romantic about politics and power...

WANDA

That is so true, I feel just sick about it. The first actually sinful proposition I ever made anybody. And he turned it down.

ANNIE

(THOUGHTFUL) That could pass as insane.

WANDA

Thank you.

ANNIE

Is that why you came by here?

WANDA

(FOUND OUT) What do you mean?

ANNIE

To find something a little more sane?

Or just someone? Or just anyone?

WANDA

Yes, it is! Isn't that funny? I hadn't thought about it, but that's exactly why I came by. I was feeling more and more like a three...

ANNIE

A three?

WANDA

You know, half an eight. One side round and finished, but the other side just isn't there. (SHE GESTURES TO DEMONSTRATE)

ANNIE

Oh... I get it. And what am I?

WANDA

You? An eight... what else? But you already knew that.

ANNIE

No, I didn't.

WANDA

Oh, of course. All together with no rough edges.

ANNIE

And what do eights need?

WANDA

Well, other eights, of course, or
sometimes...

ANNIE

Threes.

WANDA

But only in contrasting colors. Like a
green eight and a yellow three.

THEY ARE LAUGHING, HAVING A GOOD
TIME.

ANNIE

You know, I think Merle is crazy. He
could lose you.

WANDA

No, I don't think that's possible. I
half wish it were. But I'm pretty gone
on him. What I guess I need is something
to help me through the rough spots.

ANNIE

What did you have in mind?

WANDA

I don't know. But maybe you can help me.

ANNIE

Maybe. I'd be glad to try.

WANDA

You would. Why?

ANNIE

I like you, and besides, I think women should stick together.

WANDA

Oh, so do I. You know, this is nice. Very nice. There's almost something...

ANNIE

What?

WANDA

Well, conspiratorial. Like when I had my first close girlfriend in junior high and we used to plot things.

ANNIE

Oh, I think I'm a little too old for plots. What I like at this point is honesty and understanding...

WANDA

Okay -- can I ask you a question... the big question, really?

ANNIE

Shoot.

WANDA

What do you think, sexually-speaking... well, more than just sexually, I mean, romantically, emotionally... about Merle?

ANNIE

Merle? Hmmm. Somehow that wasn't the question I was expecting.

WANDA

It wasn't? Well, you and Merle have...?

ANNIE

Oh, yes... but then I never did really like electric blankets in a trailer.

WANDA

You like to cuddle.

ANNIE

Love it.

WANDA

Maybe some cold winter night you and I and Merle could all cuddle together.

Now what made me say that?

ANNIE

Curiosity. What else?

WANDA

I guess what I was trying to say was, Merle for, you know... umph! And you for friendship.

ANNIE

(A TOUCH OF DISAPPOINTMENT) I see.

WANDA

Well, I guess I shouldn't keep you any longer. I need to make up the mailing list for my wedding announcement.

ANNIE

(HATING TO CUT IT SHORT) Right... and who knows, maybe as Mrs. Jeeter, you'll get to eight sometime.

WANDA

Or at least a six. After all, now that I'm settling down. .

ANNIE

Just don't settle short, Wanda.

WANDA

Oh, no... never short. I'm hoping to do at least as well as John Glenn.

ANNIE

John Glenn?!

WANDA

Yes, he settled for Ohio and the moon.

ANNIE

(LAUGHS, THEN STOPS) What I guess I meant, was... don't expect Merle to make an eight of you. I've seen his calculator and I don't think it adds up.

WANDA

You mean, you don't think I should marry him?

ANNIE

Oh, you can marry him all you want, Wanda.

I think marriage is a fine home base.

Just don't settle for less than you need.

THEY SWAP LOOKS.

WANDA

Whatever that is.

ANNIE

Whatever.

WANDA

(SUDDENLY) Oh, Annie...

AND THEY EMBRACE.

FADE OUT.

ACT THREEMARY'S KITCHEN - EVENING, MEANWHILE...

MARY, IN PUFFED SLEEVES AND BRAIDS AGAIN, IS WRITING IN HER JOURNAL.

MARY

(READING BACK QUICKLY) Heather went to sleep with the Mickey Mouse Club on. And Tom was tired of selling. And of me... I mean, of my style. So they're both asleep and I have all night to write about my life. (SHE STARES BLANKLY AHEAD FOR TWO BEATS. THEN WRITES, SQUEEZING THE LETTERS IN, READING AS SHE WRITES) It is so good to be alive. (PAUSE. THINKS. THEN VOICE OVER AS SHE WRITES) I hope my father is alive. But at least I have Tom, who I know for a fact is only sleeping. (READING BACK) It is too bad we disagree about my image. But I think it is more sophisticated to look half your age, like Zsa Zsa Gabor, than it is to go to Lenexa of Fernwood.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

(WRITES AND V.O.) Heather needs braces.

(YAWNS) And a better personality.

HEATHER ENTERS: SEES MARY
WRITING. HEATHER IS DEMONICALLY
POSSESSED TODAY.

HEATHER

Scribble, scribble, scribble.

MARY

Heather! (FONDLY) You're up! It's so
good to see you.

HEATHER

What're you writing, a confession?

MARY

(IGNORING) Heather! Did you wake up
just to have a talk with your mother?

HEATHER

No. My hormones woke me up. I'm feeling
... female!

MARY

Your hormones... you mean... don't tell
me!!! You don't have bloating or cramps
I hope. They're purely psychological.

HEATHER

No.

MARY

Good.

HEATHER

I don't have cramps. I have the hots.
For Barberino. I woke up sweating
buckets and my knees are squishy!

MARY

(JUMPING UP) A cold drink! Some lemonade! It's powdered, so there's no pulp.

HEATHER

(FLAT) I want his body more than life itself.

MARY

(MAKING A QUICK LEMONADE) Don't think about Barberinos' body, Heather. He's much too old for you.

HEATHER

(ANGRY) He is not! He's very versatile. It said so in Teen Crush Magazine. He doesn't care if you're eight or eighty.

MARY

I've got news for you, Heather. Versatile just means he has a recording contract on top of his series deal. And that's all it means. So drink some lemonade.

HEATHER

I can't. My stomach is tossing and pitching like a frigate on a swollen sea!

MARY

I'll get you a Tums.

HEATHER

(SHOUTING) I don't want a Tums.

(MORE)

HEATHER (CONT'D)

I want the Real Thing. I want Barberino.
I want to drive him right out of his
ever loving mind! That's what I want!!

MARY

(YELLING) You're right! You don't need
a Tums! You need an exorcist! You are
completely out of control!!! (REPENTS)
I'm sorry, Heather. I'm sorry. It's
just that seeing kids grow up is very
hard for grown-ups.

HEATHER

(NOT REPENTANT) Why? Does it make you
feel like an old bag, just because I'm
hitting my stride?

MARY

No! Of course not! It makes me very
happy and fulfilled to see you developing
such a perfectly normal teenage celebrity
fetish. It's just a stage.

HEATHER

Suppose it isn't a stage? What if it's
permanent? And if you're so fulfilled,
how come you like adultery so much? Is
that what you write about all day? All
those men?

MARY

Heather... adultery is for adults to worry about. That's why it's called adultery instead of youthery or kidery or teenery. And what I write about is just ordinary, real things that I do and think on ordinary days.

HEATHER

Then, how come I can't read it? Do you describe it all in lurid detail?

MARY

How about some hot milk? It's supposed to be calming. With Dolomite?

HEATHER

How about with Dad? How come there's so much thumping and thudding up there lately?

THERE IS A THUMPING AND THUDDING
AT THE DOOR. IT'S MERLE. HEATHER
OPENS IT FIVE INCHES...

HEATHER (CONT'D)

I'll get it. Hi, Merle.

MERLE

Hi, Darlin'. Your parents home?

HEATHER

Well, Dad's asleep. So the coast is clear.

MARY

Merle?

MERLE

Hi, Mary.

HEATHER

I'm no dummy -- I get the picture.

(THEN YAWNS WITH EXAGGERATION) I'm so
tired. Better get my beauty rest.

MERLE

And you're a beauty, too. Just as young
and pretty as your mother.

HEATHER

Yeah, except that I'm going to change.
I'm getting restyled.

EXITS.

MERLE

Sure is a cute little girl, Mary.

MARY

And so sophisticated. You don't think
that's bad for a child, do you? I mean,
when I was her age, my knees were never
squishy. A little weak maybe, like if I
had a test or my picture taken, but
never, never squishy. We were so much
more innocent...

MERLE

That's funny... I was thinking something
just along those same lines the other day.

(MORE)

MERLE (CONT'D)

You know... when you showed up in that
(INDICATES) "do".

MARY REACTS: "DON'T BRING THAT
UP".

MERLE (CONT'D)

I know, I didn't bring it up. But it's
good to see you back to your natural
self again.

MERLE HAS A JUMP ROPE IN HIS
POCKET, WHICH HE HAS BEGUN TO
FONDLE AS HE SPEAKS.

MARY

Well, it's good to be back. To normal,
I mean. What's that? (JUMP ROPE)

MERLE

Oh this?... (PULLS JUMP ROPE OUT A
LITTLE) Oh, nothin'. It was an idea.

MARY

It looks like a jump rope.

MERLE

(TAKES IT OUT) It is.

MARY

Oh. That's what it looked like. Maybe
you ought to put it back. I mean... it
would look silly, if people saw a grown
man... carrying a jump rope.

MERLE

It does look silly, doesn't it?

MARY

Well, I mean, unless it was a present. You know, for Heather. Or, really, for some other child, actually, because it would be fairly silly to try to get Heather interested in a jump rope at her age.

MERLE

Well, I don't know. You see, it has ball bearing handles... it's professional style. The kind boxers use.

MARY

Right. Right! I forgot about boxers.

MERLE PUTS IT DOWN ON TABLE.

MARY LOOKS AT IT.

MERLE

Actually, what I came here to talk about my acceptance ceremony -- that is if I win tomorrow...

MARY

After what you said last night -- or rather what you didn't say -- how can you help but win?

MERLE

Why, thank you. And I will admit I'm getting things all lined up for my acceptance. How's your speech coming?

MARY

What speech?

MERLE

For the Acceptance Ceremony.

MARY

What am I supposed to accept?

MERLE

(LAUGHS) I'm really going at this
backside up, aren't I? I'm sorry. I
was hoping you'd represent the H.I.M.'s.

MARY

H.I.M.'s?

MERLE

Household Institutional Managers.

MARY

Oh, that's right -- right.

MERLE

And introduce maybe... oh, I don't know
... maybe a fitness plan or something,
on the day I'm inaugurated.

MARY

Me? Introduce a fitness plan?

MERLE

Well, I had this idea... "Jump for Fitness".

MARY

Jump... ?

MERLE

Rope. (HE SHRUGS) It's just an idea.
You know. Part of The General Good.
For people who're home a lot... like
yourself. Instead of filling up their
minds with wild fantasies. From the
television. Or expensive exercise
equipment which the poor buy on time.

MARY

You... want me to introduce...?

MERLE

Jump rope. Ropes. In fact, I thought
we might just try it.

MARY

You want me to try it? Here? Now?

MERLE

Sure. Why not? For your health and
for the community spirit. Fitness is
a matter of life or death, you know.

MARY

You want me to jump rope? (LAUGHS,
PICKING UP A HANDLE) I haven't jumped
rope since I was... since I was as old
as Zsa Zsa would look if she were me.

(CONSIDERS) Here? In the kitchen?

SHE DOES A COUPLE OF TIMID JUMPS.
MERLE WATCHES. SHE GETS INTO IT,
STARTS TO SMILE. SO, ODDLY, DOES
MERLE. THIS IS LOTS OF FUN.
MARY STOPS.

MARY (CONT'D)

(LAUGHING) This is so silly...

MERLE

(SWALLOWING) Just a couple more...

MARY

More?

MERLE'S LOOK SAYS "YES" MARY DOES. HEATHER ENTERS, WEARING PAJAMAS.

HEATHER

I'm sorry to interrupt...

MARY

Heather?!!

HEATHER

But the thumping and thudding is giving me insomnia. Could you keep it down?

MARY

Oh, of course! I'm sorry. We were just being fit.

HEATHER

Don't try to explain, Ma. I'm sure you couldn't. Just try and do it a little more quieter. Okay?

HEATHER GOES. MARY STANDS WITH THE ROPE. MERLE LOOKS AT HIS FEET.

MARY

(LOUD) You know, when I was her age, I would never, ever have spoken like that to my mother.

AND THEN SHE BEGINS TO JUMP ROPE AGAIN -- WITH REAL ABANDON.

END OF EPISODE #186

FADE OUT.